

82 Arrested in Massive, Multistate Child Exploitation Sting

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ATLANTA - A high school band director. A youth group leader. A fireman. A county leader.

All are among the 82 people, including 31 in Georgia, who have been arrested and accused of sexually exploiting children in a multistate sting.

The sting, dubbed Operation Southern Impact III, was spread over three days recently and across eight southern states from Florida to West Virginia.

Channel 2's Rikki Klaus was outside the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, where she learned that Georgia had the most arrests of the eight states involved.



GBI Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Commander Debbie Garner said the operation focused on people who possess and distribute child pornography and those who are sexually exploiting children in other ways using technology and the internet.

"We were targeting material that was the most violent sexual abuse material involving infants and toddlers," Garner said. "It is as horrific as you can imagine."

82 people arrested in 8-state child porn sting. We just spoke with the GBI. <https://t.co/1YO5G6vUmb> Live report: Ch. 2, 5pm

[pic.twitter.com/phsfEXWwSU](https://t.co/1YO5G6vUmb)

— Rikki Klaus (@RikkiKlausWSB) [May 3, 2019](#)

Garner said the material is often in the form of videos.

"We were focused on those who were collecting and viewing that content for sexual gratification," Garner said.

Most of the leads started as cybertips, Garner said.

Of the 31 people arrested in Georgia, all were men except for one woman in Jackson County. Otherwise, Garner told Klaus the suspects' races varied and their ages spanned from 20 to 70 years old.

"We come across every profession, and there's no socioeconomic class that we arrest more than others," Garner said.

Media Advisory: "Operation Southern Impact III" nets 82 arrests in eight states of men and women in possession of child porn or attempting to have sex with a child.

<https://t.co/VGDAJbwXfj> "operation [pic.twitter.com/iUKAbXaxJe](https://t.co/iUKAbXaxJe)

— GA Bureau of Invest (@GBI_GA) [May 3, 2019](#)

Raids happened in nearly every metro Atlanta county with nearly 200 police agencies involved.

The people arrested in Georgia included a county employee, a fireman and a military veteran.

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